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Experts Defend Lie Detector Tests, But Differ Over Operators' Training

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Staff Reporter

A panel of lie detector experts stoutly defended the reliability of polygraph tests before a skeptical House subcommittee yesterday.

The experts agreed that the reliability depends on the skill of the examiner, however, but they could not agree on the training required to develop a competent operator.

Fred E. Inbau, a Northwestern University law professor who estimated earlier that 80 per cent of the Federal Government's polygraph operators are not qualified, said that apprenticeship training should be required for all examiners.

Proposes Committee

He also recommended the immediate creation of an inter-agency committee to establish standards and policies for the Government's use of polygraphs.

Inbau was one of four wit-

nesses appearing before a Government Operations subcommittee headed by Rep. John J. Moss (D-Calif.).

Moss said it seemed incredible to him that an examiner without medical training could reliably interpret the physiological reactions with polygraph measures.

Rep. Ogden R. Reid (R-N.Y.) concerned about Inbau's estimate of the number of unqualified examiners, asked if Government's use of the polygraph should be halted until adequate standards are developed.

Inbau was not ready to go that far, however. "I'm not for pulling the rug out all at once," he said.

10,000 Tests Given

The subcommittee's preliminary investigation showed that 19 agencies administered more than 19,000 polygraph tests in 1963. Many of the tests were given in screening job applicants.

Cleve Backster, a New York

lie detector instructor, said polygraph examinations are three times as effective as field investigations in turning up adverse material about applicants for jobs in the Central Intelligence Agency.

Subcommittee members were startled by a report by George Lindberg of John E. Reid and Associates of Chicago that a polygraph screening disclosed 400 burglaries and 50 robberies in the past of a Chicago police force applicant.

They were even more startled to learn that the applicant was not prosecuted because of an agreement that polygraphs would not be used for that purpose.

Lindberg said the Reid laboratory also has turned up homicides that were not reported because they were not "at issue" in the examinations being conducted.

"It is surprising and somewhat shocking to me that this exists," said Rep. John S. McDonagh (D-Conn.).